

IX.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

## The Indian Peregrine Falcon.

DEAR SIR,—Circumstances have just given me leisure to assimilate the interesting information in Mr. Stuart Baker's valuable accounts of the "Nidification of some Indian Falconidæ," but on p. 225 of 'The Ibis' for 1917 occurs a statement which compels me to address you, as it reopens a question which has long worried me.

Here apropos of *Falco peregrinus peregrinator* Mr. Stuart Baker writes: "quite common on the N.W. Frontier, the Himalayas, and their subsidiary hills." Judging from the context it would appear that the words "N.W. Frontier" are used in a restricted sense, implying roughly what is known as the North-West-Frontier Province and not generally meaning the whole north-western frontier of the peninsula, including Baluchistan and a portion of the Himalayas.

If I am right in supposing that here Mr. Stuart Baker is referring to the N.W. Frontier Province, I should be very interested to know if he has any authentic evidence that his Falcon does breed in that province. I know that Capt. C. H. T. Whitehead (whose gallant death we in India cannot sufficiently deplore) wrote (Ibis, 1909, p. 263) from Kohat that *Falco peregrinator*, the Shahin, is "a resident and the commonest of our larger Falcons. Mr. Donald generally keeps a pair. . . . There are many eyries scattered throughout the District." On this statement I wrote and joined issue with Captain Whitehead and asked what evidence he had that the Falcons in question were *Falco peregrinator* and not *Falco babylonicus*. His reply was to the effect that he had not killed a specimen, and that he chiefly relied on information supplied to him by Mr. Donald, who is a most enthusiastic and successful Falconer; he does not, however, claim to be a systematic ornithologist. It was further arranged that on his return to India Captain Whitehead should obtain some specimens from the eyries and settle the question definitely. The war, however, intervened.

In my opinion *Falco peregrinator* does not breed in the N.W. Frontier Province, but is replaced there by the Red-cap Shahin, *Falco babylonicus*. Unfortunately I have not been able to obtain the part of 'Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna' which deals with the Falconidæ, so use this name under favour of correction. It should be remembered that this is the bird which many Indian ornithologists write of as *Falco barbarus*.

My evidence so far is not good, but it seems to be better than the evidence in favour of *F. peregrinator*.

Hume says ('Scrapbook,' p. 79)—under *Falco babylonicus*:—"It breeds, I know, in or close to the Peshawar valley, as well as in Cashmere." Cashmere is, in my opinion, the meeting ground of the two races.

Again (*loc. cit.* p. 84) he says:—"Major Delmé Radcliffe, our best Indian Falconer, tells me that the back in this species becomes very pale slaty from age, the red of the head becomes slightly paler, but the rufous colour of the breast is maintained, or becomes deeper. In some he has seen the head as red as that of the Torumbec (*Lithofalco chiquera*). He found it breeding near Murree." From this description there is no doubt that the species referred to as breeding at Murree was *F. babylonicus*.

Again, on the same page he quotes Dr. Jerdon as follows:—"This is the common *Shahin* of the Punjab Falconers. In the cold weather it visits the plains of the Punjab, N.W.P. and Oude."

In this last sentence we have, in my opinion, the key to the mistake which has been passed along from ornithologist to ornithologist. Much of our information about the distribution of the larger Falcons comes directly or indirectly from Falconers. The native falconer uses, describes, and talks about a *Shahin*, and his master, looking up the books for a name to give a semi-scientific flavour to his account, finds "The Shahin Falcon, *Falco peregrinator*," and writes accordingly; thus much information relating to *Falco babylonicus* is put down in compilations to *Falco peregrinator*.

I have in my service at present, and have had from 1913,

a Punjabi Falconer, called Umar Khan, who is a master of his art, and he and I together devote a lot of attention to Shahins. Now Umar Khan calls both *F. peregrinator* and *F. babylonicus* the "Shahin"; if pressed for a separate name for each, he will call the former the "Black Shahin" and the latter the "Red Sahin" (in vernacular, of course), but in his mind he clearly thinks no more of them as separate species than the different types of *Falco peregrinus* that he separates as "white," "yellow," and "red."

Since 1913 I have owned or seen a large number of freshly caught or trained Shahins, which have been all obtained in the Punjab or N.W. Frontier Province; yet of these, only one could I refer to *Falco peregrinator*. This was brought to me on 27 November, 1913, at Jhelum, whence the snow ranges in Kashmir are easily visible on a fine day, while the foothills of Jammu are but a short distance away. It was picked up suffering from a gunshot wound in the breast. The rest have all been unmistakable *Falco babylonicus*. The majority of these have been caught somewhere towards the foot of the hills in the plains of Campbellpore district, and Umar Khan (whose home is at Hayro) treats it as a commonplace that they breed in those hills, that is, the submontane ranges of the Himalayas from Murree to Attock and Peshawar; a very beautiful young Falcon which he brought me one year, he assured me had been caught practically as a "brancher." That they breed fairly close seems most probable, as these birds are caught in September and August and sometimes as early as July.

Possibly some day I may be posted to the extreme north of the Punjab and be able to settle the question, but in the meantime I must reiterate my opinion that the breeding Falcon of the N.W. Frontier Province is *Falco babylonicus* and not *F. peregrinator*, but shall be very glad to receive any proofs to the contrary.

Yours truly,

HUGH WHISTLER, M.B.O.U., F.Z.S.

(Indian Police.)

Jhang, Punjab.

19 September, 1918.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Hugh Whistler has made some very interesting remarks on a recent little article of mine on the "Nidification of the Indian Peregrines" (Ibis, 1917, p. 224).

Mr. Whistler, I am afraid with some justice, calls attention to my rather loose use of the term "North-West Frontier," for which I should have substituted "North and North-West India." At the same time, although on p. 225 I quote many observers as having "declared that it bred in some numbers on the North-West Frontier," I give no further details, and in the previous paragraph it will be noticed I remark "Peregrines of some kind."

To be exact, all one can say from what has been already recorded, is that a Peregrine "of some kind" does undoubtedly breed on the extreme N.W. Frontier from Baluchistan to Chitral, and perhaps even farther north and east. This race is almost certainly *Falco peregrinus babylonicus*, but where it meets, as a breeding bird, *F. p. peregrinator* there is, as yet, not much evidence.

The only breeding birds I have seen from Kashmir have been of the latter form, and this *certainly* breeds as far north-west as Gilgit, though one female sent to me thence for identification was to some extent intermediate.

Subspecies, of course, are difficult to determine in the areas where they link up, and I should think that Mr. Whistler is probably correct in considering north and western Kashmir as the country in which the two forms are indeterminate, and that west of this only *babylonicus* is to be found. In the cold weather either form may be found almost anywhere in India, but naturally more *babylonicus* will be found in the north-west, more *peregrinator* in west and central India, and *only* this latter in the eastern province.

But there is yet another subspecies which visits India in the winter, and this is Latham's *F. p. calidus*, which breeds in the Kirgis Steppes and western Siberia and which is not easy to distinguish from *F. p. peregrinus*. This form seems (*vide* Hartert, Vög. pal. Fauna, ii. p. 1047) to have an

enormous winter range and may be found in any portion of the Indian Empire.

It will be most interesting if Mr. Whistler can obtain some nesting birds, but I think there can be no doubt that any obtained on the Baluchistan and Afghanistan borders will be *babylonicus*. Farther east the matter is perhaps open to doubt, and evidence is required to decide how far this bird breeds.

Yours truly,

Upper Norwood,  
22 November, 1918.

E. C. STUART BAKER.

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### Mr. Harting and modern Nomenclature.

DEAR SIR,—I am surprised that Mr. Meade-Waldo regards my letter as gratuitously insulting, and can only infer that he has not read Mr. Harting's letters in 'The Ibis' and the 'Field' from 1913 onwards. I merely wished to point out that beyond the fact that Mr. Harting has been a member of the Union for so many years, he has no claim to dictate the policy of the Union in matters of nomenclature. In order to support this view I have quoted certain statements from his published works, only one of which I believe Mr. Harting admits to be erroneous. Readers of 'The Ibis' can draw their own conclusions on these points, but I regard the quotation from an author's works as fair material for criticism.

In 'The Ibis,' 1918, p. 336, Mr. Harting complains of the use of the name *Ixobrychus* on the ground that it is not to be found in Waterhouse's 'Index Generum Avium.' Is he aware that since 1889 Mr. C. W. Richmond has shown that over 500 generic names were omitted in that excellent pioneer work?

That Mr. Harting has done much useful work, especially on the "antiquarian" side of ornithology, I should be the last to deny, and I am glad to say that I thoroughly agree with what was written by him in 1872 on rules of nomenclature. "Once admitting the propriety of such

rules, the sooner they are carried into effect the better, for although it may be repugnant to the feelings of some to discard names with which they have become familiar, they should remember that these names may not be so familiar to others, and the only names which should really be so to *all*, are those which can be upheld on fixed principles by such rules as those above mentioned."

Yours truly,

Appleton Rectory,  
Near Abingdon, Berks.  
22 November, 1918.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

[No more letters on this matter can be accepted.—ED.]

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#### Fourth Oological Dinner.

The fourth Oological Dinner was held at Pagani's Restaurant on Tuesday, 10 September, 1918, and was well attended in spite of war conditions, over thirty being present. Lord Rothschild was in the Chair, and the main subject selected for illustration was the range of variation in Limicoline eggs.

The Secretary (the Rev. F. C. R. JOURDAIN) read a short paper on "Subspecific distinctions in Eggs," in which he pointed out that while eggs of allied species and even genera are sometimes indistinguishable, there are numerous cases in which the eggs of subspecies show constant differences. As there are only a few cases in which more than one race of the same species breeds within the British Isles, this fact does not come prominently before the collector of British Birds' eggs, but it has long been known that the eggs of the St. Kilda Wren (*Troglodytes t. hirtensis*) differed constantly from those of the Common Wren (*Troglodytes t. troglodytes*). Another case which has not been previously noticed, is that of the British race of the Song-Thrush (*Turdus philomelus clarkei*), the eggs of which average larger than those of its Continental representative (*T. p. philomelus*). This was illustrated by a series of eggs taken in

France, Finland, and Roumania, not selected in any way, but all considerably below the average size of British eggs. A series of eggs of *Charadrius dubius curonicus* from such widely-separated localities as France, Spain, Germany, Central Asia, and Japan, showed little variation, but the eggs of *C. dubius jerdoni* from southern India, of which Mr. Stuart Baker showed a series, were remarkably different in size and type of markings. Another instance is that of the Mediterranean form of *Puffinus kuhli*, which lays a much smaller egg than the Atlantic race of the same species. The above instances are purposely chosen from birds on the British list, but might be indefinitely extended, and the speaker appealed for a closer study of the eggs of the various races of birds, urging that constant distinctions in the eggs were of as great importance as differences in shades of colouring in the adult.

MR. E. C. STUART BAKER exhibited some eggs of *Tringa guttifer*, Armstrong's Sandpiper, and made the following remarks:—

“The eggs which I am exhibiting to-night are, I believe, the first and only eggs ever taken of this rare Wader. The two clutches each of four eggs have been in my possession ever since 1911, when they were most generously given to me by Captain Stein, I.M.S., together with the rest of his most interesting collection of Tibetan eggs. In a letter accompanying them, Captain Stein said that they were the eggs of a small kind of Greenshank, with yellowish legs, which appeared to breed in company with Redshanks in the marshy land surrounding the Rhantso Lake, between 13,000 and 14,000 feet elevation. The true Redshank bred there in some numbers, but this bird was rather larger and could be distinguished at a glance by its having yellow-green instead of red legs. Major F. M. Bailey does not appear to have noticed this Sandpiper, but observes that the Greenshank does not breed in Tibet though it passes through in some numbers on migration.

Although it seemed almost certain that the eggs were

those of Armstrong's Sandpiper, there was no real evidence to prove it, and the eggs were put on one side marked unknown. For several years one British Trade Officer after another did their best to get more eggs for me together with skins of the birds themselves, but all without result, though more than one confirmed the fact that Yellow-shanks, as they named them, did sometimes breed on the highest marshes, though the majority merely passed through on the way to their still unknown breeding-grounds.

At last, in March this year, I received from Mr. D. Macdonald a single egg together with the remains of the parent bird, which had been taken on the Rhamtso Marshes on 29 May, 1917. Although only the legs, wings, and a portion of the back, head and beak were left and the whole constituted only a very evil-smelling remnant, it was quite sufficient for identification, and a perfectly authenticated egg of Armstrong's Sandpiper had been obtained. This year I have had another single egg sent me by the same gentleman, taken at the same place on 5 June, 1918.

With these two well-authenticated eggs in my possession for comparison and the fact that there is no doubt that the eggs previously received had been laid by a bird of some sort with yellowish-green legs, I think we may accept them as good eggs of this *Tringa*.

Except that they average larger than the average Red-shank's, I do not think they could possibly be discriminated from those of that bird.

The eggs measure as follows :—

Clutch No. 1 F, taken 16. v. 1910, Rhamtso Lake, about 14,000 feet elevation :  $47.6 \times 33.0$  ;  $48.0 \times 32.2$  ;  $47.5 \times 31.4$  ;  $47.8 \times 31.6$  mm.

Clutch No. 1 E, taken same date and place, but on lower marsh, about 13,700 feet :  $45.9 \times 31.4$  ;  $46.7 \times 31.9$  ;  $46.1 \times 31.6$  ;  $43.2 \times 31.0$  mm.

A single egg, taken same place, 3. vi. 1909 :  $47.7 \times 32.7$  mm.



A single egg, taken 29. v. 17, same place, and sent me with skin :  $46.3 \times 34.1$  mm.

A single egg, taken 5. vi. 18, from same place :  $45.8 \times 33.1$  mm."

In my second exhibit I show what I believe to be an authentic egg of the Large Sand-Plover (*Ægialitis geoffroyi*).

This egg I obtained from Colonel R. H. Rattray, who in turn got it from a Captain Wilson. It was one of a clutch of four eggs, three of which most unfortunately got broken ; the parent bird was shot off the nest and sent with the one unbroken egg to Colonel Rattray. The remains of the very ragged skin were at first identified as the Small Sand-Plover (*Ægialitis mongolica*), but the size of the wing, just under 6 inches, showed it to be a specimen of the Large.

The egg is the usual *Ægialitis* shape and texture, though perhaps less pyriform than most, but in colour it is so completely *sui generis* that it may prove to be somewhat aberrant. The ground-colour is a pale grey stone-colour with a distinct olive tinge, and the markings consist of specks, irregular blotches, and scraggly marks (hardly lines) of dull sandy-brown and earth-brown. Under these are a few similar marks of pale lavender and neutral tint. One can hardly imagine a less conspicuous egg if lying in its nest on dirty sand.

It measures  $33.1 \times 23.5$  mm.

It was taken in June, the early part of the month, close to Lake Tso Morari in Ladak.

In my third box I show another egg which I believe to be unique. This is an egg of the Masked Finfoot (*Helipais personata*). This egg is perhaps not altogether beyond doubt, so I give its history as told me by Dr. M. Gregerson, who gave it to me with the skin of the parent bird :—

It was taken by Dr. Gregerson and Mr. B. Nuttall when on a shooting trip in the uninhabited, almost unknown, swamps which stretch along the foot-hills of Assam and

between them and the Brahmapootra. These swamps are practically never traversed except by elephant-catchers and a few of the Hill tribesmen who come down to hunt for rubber and other forest produce. The waterways stretch for endless weary miles through forest, swamp, and jungle of the wildest description, now gorgeous green virgin forest, then impenetrable cane-brake, and again every now and then wide reaches of water overgrown with every conceivable kind of reed, grass, and water-plant.

Messrs. Gregerson and Nuttall were in a dugout, poling along one of these waterways, when they suddenly came round a sharp corner and emerged into one of these open parts. As they did so a bird slid off what appeared to be a small pile of dead rubbish just in front of them, diving at once, but reappearing at a little distance, when it was at once shot, proving to be a *male* Finfoot. After the bird had been recovered the "pile of weeds and rubbish" was inspected and found to be a nest containing the present egg.

The egg is a dull yellow stone-colour very faintly marked with a few spots and blotches of neutral tint. The texture is hard, close, and fine, and the surface smooth but with a few small pimples on it.

It measures  $44.2 \times 30.5$  mm., and in shape is a regular but blunt oval.

It was taken on 24 July, 1904.

I also show a box containing fourteen clutches of eggs of *Calandrella brachydactyla longipennis*, the Tibetan, or Brooks' Short-toed Lark. There are four clutches containing four eggs, six containing three, and four two eggs each in this series, but, as a matter of actual fact, the number of eggs met with in a clutch is most often only two, sometimes three, and very rarely four. I have now seen about forty clutches of which seven have contained four, and have records of about fifteen other clutches none of which had more than three. It will be noticed that in the series exhibited the extreme in each type of coloration is shown in clutches consisting of but two eggs, and the next most noticeable point is that in several clutches the eggs vary

greatly in character and look almost as if laid by different birds, although I have no reason to believe this to be the case.

The average size of sixty eggs is  $21.1 \times 14.7$ ; the longest egg is  $22.6 \times 14.4$ ; the broadest  $21.6 \times 15.6$ ; the shortest  $19.4 \times 14.6$ ; and the most narrow  $20.5 \times 13.9$  mm.

MR. PERCY F. BUNYARD exhibited the following eggs from his collection :—

Stone-Curlew (*Edicnemus edicnemus*). A series showing extreme and modified forms, also one clutch from Suffolk with greenish ground.

Cream-coloured Courser (*Cursorius gallicus*). An extremely beautiful and well represented series, all from Fuerteventura.

American Golden Plover (*Charadrius dominicus*). A typical clutch of four from Point Barrow, Alaska.

Golden Plover (*Charadrius apricarius*). An exceptionally fine series, showing three distinct ground-colours—green, cream, and reddish-brown—some of which were remarkably heavily pigmented; included in the series were also three clutches taken by the exhibitor in the Faeroes.

Kentish Plover (*Aegialitis alexandrina*). A well represented series from Kent, Channel Islands, and Holstein; among them were four exceptionally fine clutches of the scrolled or veined form, also a clutch of four.

Lesser Ringed Plover (*Aegialitis dubia*). Five clutches of four and one of five, all very typical.

Ringed Plover (*Aegialitis hiaticula*). A series showing great variation both in ground-colour and markings; some were heavily and others finely marked.

Dotterel (*Eudromias morinellus*). Two clutches from Scotland and seven from the Continent showing great variation.

Sociable Plover (*Chettusia gregaria*). Two clutches of four from the Crimean Heights.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). A carefully selected series showing types and varieties; also the cyanic form, and

two remarkably fine erythristic eggs with very bright red ground.

Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*). These exceptionally beautiful eggs were well represented by extreme, modified forms, and varieties.

Oyster-catcher (*Hematopus ostralegus*). A series showing the scrolled or veined and heavily blotched forms; also type clutches, one from the Faeroes and one from Kent. See Ticehurst, 'History of the Birds of Kent,' p. 435.

Corn-Bunting (*Emberiza calandra*). A clutch of four from Suffolk, with creamy white ground, and large conspicuous underlying markings showing through purplish grey.

British Song-Thrush (*T. m. clarkei*) × Blackbird (*T. merula*). A clutch of three eggs from a Blackbird paired with a Thrush, taken at Bexley Heath, Kent, by Mr. William A. Carter. Mr. Bunyard read the following communication from the taker:—"These eggs I took in the hedge at the bottom of my garden. I watched the whole process. A hen Blackbird built the nest and covered the eggs, but I never saw the cock Blackbird. On the other hand, a cock Thrush was always in the neighbourhood; the two birds were often together, and the Thrush used to sing while the Blackbird was covering the eggs. When I had assured myself that she would only lay the three eggs—this was also in June 1912—I took them; she had covered the three for nearly a week, but there was no sign of incubation and the contents of the egg almost entirely consisted of albumen. There were traces of yolk, but very slight, so I suppose they would never have hatched."

Mr. Bunyard then made the following remarks:—"I believe this to be the only really authenticated clutch known, the eggs bear characteristics of both species, the formation and the arrangements of the markings are those of the Thrush, and the colour that of the Blackbird—these are very distinctive in appearance."

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*). Seven eggs from Surrey all from the same bird, all with eggs of the Whitethroat

(*Sylvia communis*). Four of these were exhibited at the Second Oological Dinner in 1916 ('Ibis,' 1917, p. 126); two were taken in 1917, and one in 1916. For further particulars of these remarkable eggs, which were all taken by the exhibitor, see 'British Birds,' vol. xii. p. 92.

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*). Two eggs with those of the Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*), taken by the exhibitor this year in Surrey (see 'British Birds,' vol. xii. p. 115).

Razorbill (*Alca torda*). A very remarkable egg with a broad richly-pigmented band of brownish black on a creamy-white ground; at its broadest part the band measures 33 mm. One showing a yellowish ground with a few surface-markings of reddish brown, and large conspicuous underlying markings showing through greyish black—a rare variety. One with pinkish ground with veined markings of rich brown; the underlying markings are conspicuous and also veined: a very beautiful egg.

Common Guillemot (*Uria troille*). One with distinctly grey ground, surface-markings with black underlying marks showing through various shades of grey; one richly pigmented all over black-brown, with darker markings of the same colour; one with pale greenish-blue ground heavily veined olive-brown.

The Rev. F. C. R. JOURDAIN exhibited, in addition to the series of *Charadrius dubius* and *Turdus philomelus* referred to above, two sets of blue eggs of the Nightingale, *Luscinia megarhyncha*. The first was taken in Kent by Colonel Rattray in 1908 and were exhibited at the British Ornithologists' Club in 1916; while the second clutch of very similar colouring, but smaller in size, was taken in Staffordshire during the past season. All four eggs in the latter set proved infertile.

Mr. Jourdain also exhibited on behalf of Dr. W. Eagle Clarke a very large egg of the Guillemot, taken at Barra Head in 1918, and measuring 98·8 × 58·0 mm.

A very finely-marked Guillemot egg from the Treshnish Isles, Inner Hebrides, taken by Mr. O. A. J. Lee, and one of

the finest eggs of the Black Guillemot ever shown, taken on Fair Island, were also sent for exhibition by Dr. Eagle Clarke.

Lord ROTHSCHILD exhibited the following eggs from the Tring Museum :—

<i>Hematopus ostralegus.</i>	9 varieties.
„ <i>palliatu8.</i>	3 eggs.
<i>Ædicnemus œdicnemus œdicnemus.</i>	4 varieties.
<i>Vanellus vanellus.</i>	28 varieties.
<i>Squatarola squatarola.</i>	1 clutch, Lower Petshora.
<i>Charadrius hiaticula.</i>	4 varieties.
„ <i>dubius curonicus.</i>	6 varieties.
„ <i>ruficapillus.</i>	3 eggs, Queensland.
„ <i>pallidus.</i>	2 eggs, Gaboon.
„ <i>tricoloraris.</i>	1 egg, South Africa.
„ <i>melanops.</i>	1 clutch, Queensland.
„ <i>sanctæ-helene.</i>	2 eggs, St. Helena
„ <i>peroni.</i>	2 eggs, Mengalum I., nr. Borneo.
<i>Thinornis novæseelandicæ.</i>	3 eggs, Chatham Islands.
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta.</i>	2 varieties.
<i>Numenius borealis.</i>	1 clutch, Lower Anderson River, collected by McFarlane. This Curlew, the Eskimo Curlew, is now nearly extinct, but has still been observed in 1913 and a single specimen shot in 1915.
<i>Numenius arquata arquata.</i>	1 variety.
<i>Tringa totanus totanus.</i>	10 varieties.
<i>Limicola falcinellus falcinellus.</i>	8 varieties.
<i>Gallinago gallinago.</i>	10 varieties.
<i>Scolopax rusticola rusticola.</i>	5 varieties.
<i>Philohela minor.</i>	1 clutch.
<i>Cœnocorypha aucklandica tristrani.</i>	1 egg, Antipodes Island.
„ „ <i>pusilla.</i>	1 clutch, Chatham Islands.
<i>Thinocorus orbignyianus.</i>	4 eggs, Bolivia.
<i>Chionis minor.</i>	2 eggs, South Orkney Islands.
„ <i>crozettensis.</i>	2 eggs, Crozet Islands.
<i>Anarhynchus frontalis.</i>	1 egg, New Zealand.

Mr. ROBERT H. READ exhibited a series of nests and eggs of Waders, few of which have been found nesting in the British Isles, and nearly all taken by himself.

*From Norway.*—Two nests and eggs of the Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*), taken on the margins of

marshy pools in the Dovrefjeld, one amongst wet sphagnum and the other amongst coarse grasses just sprouting up on the muddy edge of the pool.

Nest and eggs of the Wood-Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) in a tussock on a dry part of the same marsh as the two foregoing were found.

Nest and eggs of the Great Snipe (*Gallinago media*) from the Romsdal Valley, taken by Dr. Cuthbert Christy on the dry sloping side of a hill.

*From Sweden.*—Nests and eggs of the Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*) and Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleuca*), the latter being unusually large pale eggs with small spots, much resembling eggs of the Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*). Both nests were on the same small island in a lake, the former on the shingly sand and the latter amongst heather.

*From Denmark.*—Nests and eggs of the Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), very exposed on short wiry sea-grass, and nest and eggs of the Reeve (*Machetes pugnax*) well concealed in long marsh-grass. Also one of a set of two eggs of the latter species, pale blue, and sparsely marked with a few minute black and brown dots.

*From Spain.*—Nest and eggs of the Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) amongst samphire on the dried-up marisma, and eggs of the Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) from the shallow waters of the marisma. Whilst photographing the latter Mr. Read was fortunate enough to get a good view of the famous wild camels of the marisma galloping away in the distance, the herd numbering some sixteen or eighteen head.

*From Scotland.*—Nest and three small eggs of the Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleuca*). The average weight of these was less than half that of the eggs from Sweden above mentioned. Also a set of five fine eggs, without nest, of the Golden Plover (*Charadrius apricarius*).

Mr. Read also exhibited sets of small eggs of the Golden Plover and Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and other abnormal eggs of Lapwing, Oyster-catcher (*Hematopus ostralegus*),

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), and Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*).

Major C. SMEED exhibited a clutch of eggs of Cream-coloured Courser (*Cursorius gallicus*), taken by himself in the Canary Isles in 1914. Also a remarkable set of 5 eggs of the Yellow Bunting (*Emberiza citrinella*) closely resembling those of the Corn Bunting (*E. calandra*), but from which the hen was identified by Lieut. J. S. Dyson, R.A.: also a set of 10 eggs of Little Grebe (*Podiceps ruficollis*) taken in 1918: a set of 5 pale blue eggs of Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and one of 4, abnormally large: and a set of 4 Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) with green zone round big end of the egg.

Mr P. B. SMYTH showed a fine series of eggs of the Marsh-Warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*), taken by himself in 1918 and showing a wonderful range of variation. This is the more remarkable, for as a rule the eggs of this species are not very variable. Two very pale sets from the same bird were especially noticeable.

Dr. J. WIGLESWORTH showed a very handsomely blotched clutch of eggs of the Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) from the Orkneys.

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#### The proposed 'Systema Avium.'

The Committee of the B. O. U. has recently appointed a special committee to formulate plans for the preparation and publication, in conjunction with the American Ornithologists' Union, of a new list of the Birds of the World. As the matter will be submitted to the members of the Union at the Annual General Meeting, the Committee wish to let those who will not be able to be present, know what they are proposing to do.

As all working ornithologists are aware, the subject of nomenclature is a very difficult one, and even if the laws



of priority, as laid down under the rules of the International Zoological Congress, are strictly adhered to, there are many points, as, for instance, the limits of genera, and the amount of differentiation sufficient for the recognition of subspecies, which must always remain to a great extent a matter of individual opinion. The Committee believes that, if it is possible by the joint efforts of a body of English-speaking ornithologists to produce an authoritative list of the birds of the world, it would be of great use, especially to those whose interest in ornithology is with field-work or anatomy, and, furthermore, that it would tend greatly to stabilize our nomenclature.

The special committee appointed to take this matter into consideration is as follows:—Messrs. E. C. Stuart Baker, C. Chubb, W. Eagle Clarke, E. Hartert, T. Iredale, G. M. Mathews, Lord Rothschild, and W. I. Sclater. This committee has met several times and has communicated its plans to the Secretary of the A. O. U. They hope shortly to have a reply from the Council of that body, and if, as they hope, this is in favour of the project, they propose, with the co-operation of the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union and that of other societies in English-speaking countries who may be interested in the matter, to carry out a scheme to this effect.

It is proposed to issue a series of six volumes, under the title of 'Systema Avium,' each dealing with one of the zoogeographical regions—*i. e.*, Palæarctic, Indian, Ethiopian, Australian, Nearctic, and Neotropical.

For each volume a responsible editor will be appointed, but it is to be understood that the whole work should be subject to the revision of the Committee and that the arrangement and classification of each volume should be on the same lines, and that such generic and specific names as appear in any two or more volumes should be the same, so that complete uniformity might be secured.

Each list is to be drawn up somewhat on the lines of the recently published B. O. U. List of British Birds, but no

very definite plans can be formed, or decision taken, until the Committee hear whether the A. O. U. will co-operate with us in the matter.

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#### Notice to Members.

The Annual Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union will be held at 3.30 P.M. on the 12th of March next in the Meeting-Room of the Zoological Society in Regent's Park. It will be followed by the usual dinner, in conjunction with the B. O. C., at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.1. The Secretary hopes that all members who have candidates to propose will send him their names and addresses at once to Chief Police Office, West India Docks, E. 14. Furthermore, the Secretary would like to remind members who are proposing new candidates that they are expected to attend the meeting and speak on behalf of their nominees, or, if they are unable themselves to be present, to write to the Secretary on the qualifications of the proposed new members.